

Message Text

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21

ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7455

C O N F I D E N T I A L 959

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AS, PINT

SUBJ: FRASER DISMISSES THE MINISTER FOR POST AND TELE-
COMMUNICATIONS

1. PRIME MINISTER FRASER FORCED THE RESIGNATION OF THE
MINISTER FOR POST AND ELECOMMUNICATIONS VIC GARLAND, LIB-
W.A. ON FEBRUARY 6 PENDING COMPLETION OF AN INVESTIGATION
INTO CHARGES THAT GARLAND PAID AN INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE FOR
THE SENATE FROM THE ACT, MR. MICHAEL CAVANOUGH, \$500 IN
RETURN FOR CAVANOUGH'S PROMISE TO ALLOCATE HIS FIRST
PREFERENCES TO THE LIBERAL PARTY.

2. THIS CHARGE FIRST CAME TO LIGHT IN AN ARTICLE PUB-
LISHED IN THE CANBERRA TIMES ON DECEMBER 6. GARLAND DENIED
THE CHARGES ON DECEMBER 8 CLAIMING THAT CAVANOUGH HAD SAID
THAT HE WOULD DIRECT HIS PREFERENCES TO LIBERAL CANDIDATE
JOHN KNIGHT PRIOR TO RECEIVING THE \$500 FROM GARLAND. BOTH
GARLAND AND FRASER CLAIM THAT GARLAND WILL BE COMPLETELY
CLEARED OF THESE CHARGES AND THEN WILL BE FREE TO RESUME
HIS PORTFOLIO. PENDING COMPLETION OF THE INVESTIGATION,
THE MINISTER FOR THE CAPITAL TERRITORY, MR. E.L. ROBINSON,
WILL HOLD THE POST OF MINISTER FOR POST AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS
AS WELL.

3. COMMENT: THE LIBERAL PARTY PASSED OUT SUBSTANTIAL
SUMS OF MONEY AND PROMISES OF GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS
TO SEVERAL INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES FOR THE SENATE SEATS
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IN THE ACT IN AN EFFORT TO OBTAIN PREFERENCES FOR ITS

TWO CANDIDATES. THE QUESTION OF WHEN A CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION BECOMES A BRIDE IS AS INTERESTING A LEGAL QUESTION IN AUSTRALIA AS IT IS IN THE UNITED STATES. IF GARLAND IS NOT EXONERATED, WE ANTICIPATE SIMILAR CHARGES MIGHT ARISE IN CONNECTION WITH THE SENATE CAMPAIGNS IN THE ACT.
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